

NEBRASKA TRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Location: Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1313 Farnam on the Mall, Room 227
Omaha, Nebraska
January 25, 2007

The Nebraska Telecommunications Relay Advisory Committee met on January 25, 2007 at the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Omaha, Nebraska.

There being a quorum present, the meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Tami Richardson-Nelson. The following committee members were present:

Mr. James Devaney;
Ms. Tami Richardson-Nelson;
Mr. Art Nelson;
Ms. Patti Reitz;
Ms. Kim Remington;

Commissioner Jerry Vap had a previous appointment and could not be present.

Introduction of Guests: Present from the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) was Tanya Wendel and Alan Cosse – Public Information Officer. Gene Hand and Steve Stovall were present from the Public Service Commission. Present from Hamilton Telecommunications were Barb Handrup and Christa Cervantes. Francis Beaurivage and Jamy Elker interpreted the meeting. Present from the public was Shirley Meyer.

Introduction of New Members: A welcome was extended to new committee member Ms. Kim Remington.

Approval of the Agenda: Motion by Ms. Richardson-Nelson to place item four, “Election of New Officers” after item 12 on the Agenda. Mr. Devaney seconded. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the agenda was approved as revised.

Approval of the Minutes of January 26, 2006: Motion made by Mr. Nelson to accept the minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Devaney. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the minutes were approved as presented.

Old Business:

1). Equipment Distribution Program Legislation Update – LB 297 (Tanya Wendel).
A draft copy of the bill was presented to the committee. Ms. Wendel indicated that Senators Pedersen and Stuthman sponsored the bill. The bill removes the one-cent annual cap on the amount appropriated for administering the specialized telecommunications equipment program. LB 297 would allow the Public Service Commission to allocate funds to this program as need dictates. Mr. Hand indicated that Commissioner Vap is providing testimony in favor of this bill.

Ms. Wendel provided a FAQ sheet to the committee for their review. The public hearing on LB 297 with the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee was held on January 30, 2007 at 1:30.

Motion by Mr. Nelson for Ms. Richardson-Nelson to present a letter of support to the Chair of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee for LB 297. Seconded by Ms. Patti Reitz. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the motion carried.

Public Service Commission Comments:

1.) Updated Relay Statistics – Gene Hand. Mr. Hand shared various forecast scenarios that will be presented to the Commission at the surcharge hearing on March 6, 2007 at 1:30 p.m. Gene indicated that a price increase of 5% is being requested by Hamilton pursuant to the renewal notice for traditional relay. A response to the CapTel rate for the renewal period is still pending. As of July 1, 2007 the Commission will be in the last two-year renewal period of the contract which will expire June 30, 2009. Mr. Stovall indicated relay statistics have been updated through December 2006.

Mr. Hand directed attention to the scenario on attachment two which assumes the surcharge is reduced to four cents July 1. The reserve balance goes from a seven month reserve in FY 2006-07 to four months reserve at FY 2007-08. It was also indicated that at a five-cent surcharge (attachment three), the monthly expenditures are almost equal to the monthly income, not allowing a meaningful decline in the fund balance.

Motion by Ms. Richardson-Nelson that the Advisory Committee recommend to the Commission that the surcharge be reduced to four cents effective July 1, 2007. Seconded by Mr. Devaney. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the motion carried. Mr. Stovall was directed to draft a letter for Ms. Richardson-Nelson's signature.

Motion by Mr. Devaney that if LB 297 passes, that the Advisory Committee recommend to the Commission that the surcharge for the Telecommunications Relay Service be reviewed and the monthly surcharge set at five cents per line. Motion seconded by Ms. Patti Reitz. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the motion carried. Mr. Stovall was directed to draft a letter for Ms. Richardson-Nelson's signature.

Mr. Stovall provided an electronic copy of all three letters (letter of support of LB 297, surcharge recommendation and surcharge review of LB 297 if enacted) to all committee members on February 5, 2007.

2). Equipment Distribution Program update and 3)., Discussion of Setting the Relay Surcharge for the July 1, 2007 Fiscal Year – Steve Stovall. Mr. Stovall stressed the importance of the surcharge determination being dependent on LB 297. If LB 297 passes, the current five-cent surcharge can fund both the relay service and the increase cost in the equipment distribution program. The surcharge at its current five-cent level would allow the current demand for equipment to be met while at the same time reducing the fund balance. Attachment

3A reflect a three month fund balance at FY ending 2007-08. This assumes an increased level of spending based on LB 297 passing. If LB 297 does not pass, a five-cent surcharge cannot be justified with respect to current minutes of use and monthly revenue levels.

Chairperson's Comments: Ms. Richardson-Nelson expressed appreciation to all members for their service on this committee.

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Comments:

1.) Advisory Committee Members Terms – New Appointments; (Ms. Wendel). Ms. Wendel indicated Ms. Reitz agrees to another term. Mr. Hohnbaum's term expired January 31, 2007. This vacancy must be filled.

Hamilton Telecommunications Comments (Ms. Handrup/Ms. Cervantes):

Ms. Handrup provided statistics regarding relay traffic. The annual report provided by Ms. Handrup is projecting a 15% decline in relay minutes. Outreach activities were shared.

Hamilton now has 14 states; Wisconsin, Georgia, Idaho, Nebraska, Iowa, Wyoming, Kentucky, Louisiana, Washington DC, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Arizona, Maine and Montana.

Ms. Handrup indicated that an independent consultant has been contracted to provide an evaluation of their systems performance and relay operator functions.

Ms. Wendel solicited Hamilton's involvement in hosting a "Deaf Nation" conference in Nebraska in 2008. This one-day annual event features new technologies and community involvement opportunities. The Qwest Center was suggested as a possible site. Ms. Remington offered her assistance in coordinating this conference.

New Business: No new business.

Election of New Officers: Motion by Mr. Devaney for Ms. Richardson-Nelson's term as Chair to remain for another term. Seconded by Ms. Reitz. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the motion carried.

Motion by Mr. Nelson to nominate Ms. Remington to serve as Vice-Chair. Seconded by Ms. Reitz. Nominations closed. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the motion for Ms. Remington to serve as Vice-Chair carried.

Public Comment: None.

Next Meeting: Tentative, possibly early to late summer.

Motion for meeting to be adjourned at 3:14 p.m. by Ms. Tami Richardson-Nelson. Seconded by Ms. Reitz. Upon agreement of all committee members present, the motion to

adjourn carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven G. Stovall - Staff Accountant
Nebraska Public Service Commission
March 2, 2007